

NY 100-41674

UNDEVELOPED LEAD

NEW YORK

At New York City, N. Y.

Will verify subject's residence and ascertain his activities upon his return to the United States from France, presumably in September, 1946. If possible, secure the subject's reason for his trip to France.

NY 100-41674

mentioned [REDACTED] b7C

As previously reported, the records of Selective Service Board #178, reflected that the subject is negro, and was born September 4, 1908, at Natchez, Mississippi.

A review of the file of the subject reflected that he is a negro writer, who previously wrote for "New Masses" and "Daily Worker". In addition, he had published five novels concerning the fight of the colored people, besides writing skits and stories in a similar vein. He wrote two articles for "Atlantic Monthly" for August and September, 1944, entitled "I Tried To Be A Communist". The theme of these articles appeared to be that he broke with the Party because they were unable to recognize him as a friend. The articles did not seem to attack the Communist Party as revolutionary, but attacked it because of the failure of individuals in the Party to properly recognize and deal with problems in society.

The indices of the New York Field Division reflected no further information concerning the subject.

- PENDING -

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Director, FBI  
FROM : *ES* SAC, New York  
SUBJECT: RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
SECURITY MATTER - C  
Bureau file 100-157464

DATE: February 19, 1947

Reference is made to Bureau letter dated September 5, 1946 and to the report of Special Agent [redacted] dated June 18, 1946 at New York in the above entitled case.

RICHARD WRIGHT left the United States for France in May 1946 and at the present time, it is not known when he intends to return to this country. In the February 1, 1947 edition of "THE NEW LEADER", an anti-Communist publication of the Social Democrats, appears an article entitled, "AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD WRIGHT". This is a translation of an article under the same title that appeared recently in "DIE WELTWACKE", a weekly journal published in Zurich, Switzerland. WRIGHT was interviewed at Zurich concerning Negro problems and expressed his resentment of racial discrimination in the United States.

Inasmuch as no information has been developed indicating Communist activity on the part of WRIGHT since he severed connections with the Communist Party and further in view of the fact that he may not return to the United States for some time, this case is being closed unless the Bureau otherwise directs.

In view of the subject's past activities, it is believed that the security index card in this case should not be cancelled.

ED  
100-41674

RECORDED  
& INDEXED

100-157464-28

31 FEB 21 1947

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY [signature]

P441  
1947

WRIGHT, R. 147

110

SAC, New York  
Director, FBI  
RICHARD W. WRIGHT  
SECURITY MATTER - C

September 5, 1946

Your office is instructed to follow the activities of the instant subject in the Communist field closely upon his return from France. Continuing investigation, every effort should be made to obtain admissible evidence tending to prove the subject's membership in, or affiliation with, the Communist Party. In the event you are unable to develop such evidence, further consideration should be given the advisability of cancelling the Security Index Card on this individual.

100-157464  
rb

b7c

MAILED 9  
SEP 5 1946 P.M.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RECORDED

100-157464-291  
FBI

Tolson  
L. A. Tamm  
Clegg  
Glavin  
Ladd  
Nichols  
Rosen  
Tracy  
Harbo  
Hendon  
Quinn Tamm  
Nease  
Gandy

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP100/bk

WRIGHT, R. 148

109



## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Director, FBI

FROM : SAC, New York

DATE: January 19, 1948

SUBJECT: RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT;  
SECURITY MATTER - C  
(Bureau file 100-157464)Cancel  
b2  
b7D

A review of instant file reflects that since subject's severance of his connections with the Communist Party, and his public criticism of its policies during 1944, he has not engaged in any Communist activities; that, in fact, according to information submitted by [REDACTED] subject was definitely not of a Marxist frame of mind as indicated by certain critical comments he made concerning conditions within the Party.

In view of the foregoing circumstances Bureau authority is requested at this time for the cancellation of the security index card maintained on subject by the New York Office.

Cancelled  
1-31-48  
lml

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTG/bce

mbm  
100-41674

RECORDED 1-22-1948  
INDEXED 22 JAN 21 1948

EX-119

SAC,

Director, FBI  
New York

February 3, 1948

RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT;  
SECURITY MATTER - C  
Your File 100-41674

In accordance with your recommendation, the Security Index Card relative to the captioned individual has been cancelled and you are authorized to place your copy thereof in the investigative case file.

RECORDED

100-157464 - 29

cvw  
fwd

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/bce

67C

Mr. Tolson  
Mr. E. A. Tamm  
Mr. Clegg  
Mr. Glavin  
Mr. Ladd  
Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Rosen  
Mr. Tracy  
Mr. Egan  
Mr. Gurnea  
Mr. Harbo  
Mr. Mohr  
Mr. Pennington  
Mr. Quinn Tamm  
Mr. Nease  
Miss Gandy

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED 11  
★ FEB 3 1948 P.M.  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

54  
71 FEB 5 - 1948

WRIGHT, R. 150

112

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

AUG 7

RETURN  
TO WRITER  
UNCLAIMED



  
c/o General Delivery  
Los Angeles, California

UNCLAIMED

**PU**



WRIGHT, R. 151

RECORDED

EX-40

EOD  
100-157464-22

Mr. James M. McInerney  
Acting Head, Criminal Division  
John Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

July 20, 1945

RICHARD WRIGHT

Attached for your information is a copy of a letter dated July 4, 1945, together with photostatic copies of enclosures, received from [redacted] care of General Delivery, Los Angeles, California. This letter has been acknowledged.

Enclosures

b7c

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BJB/ka

JUL 20 4 45 PM '45  
RECEIVED  
DEPT. OF JUSTICE

RECEIVED  
FBI  
RECORDED - HY 116  
JUL 21 1945

*Subj. of [unclear]*

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. E. A. Tamm
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Coffey
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Carson
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Gurnea
- Mr. Hendon
- Mr. Pennington
- Mr. Quinn Tamm
- Mr. Nease
- Miss Gandy

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED 15  
★ JUL 21 1945 P.M.  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

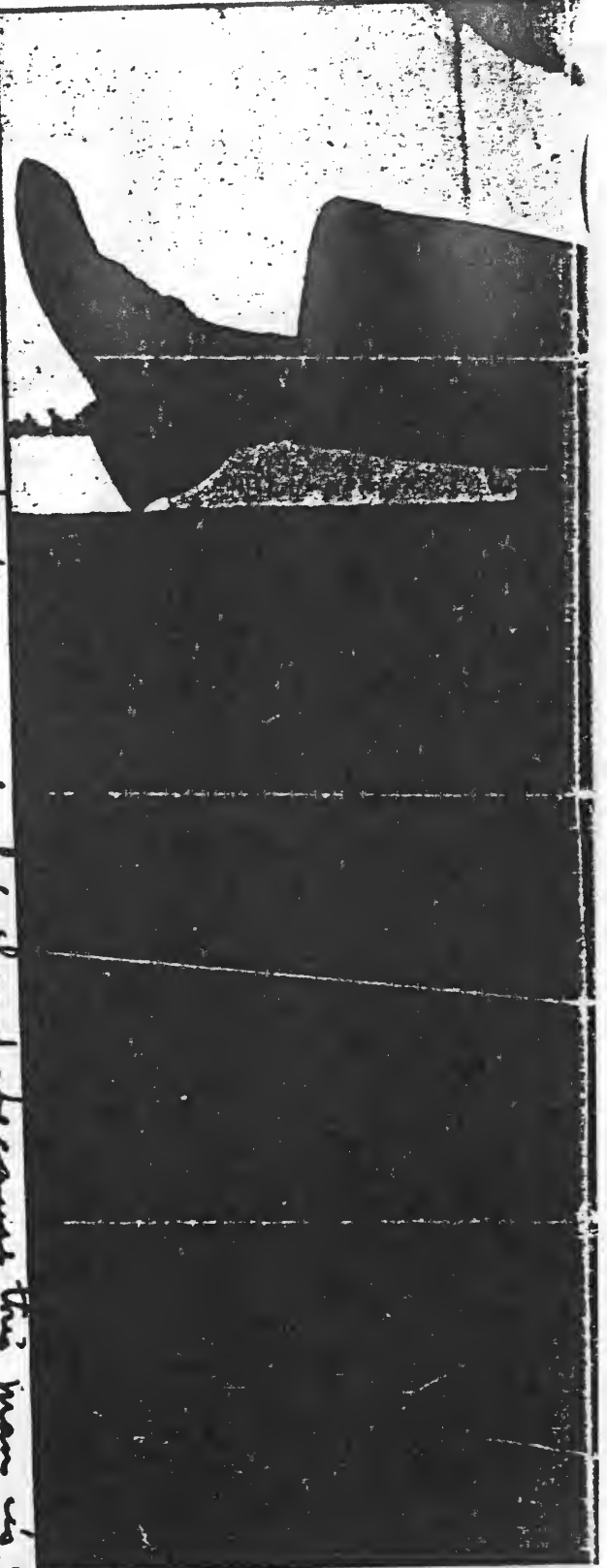
WRIGHT  
R. 152



100-157464-22

WRIGHT, R. 153





*Please have a nut doctor examine his head because this man is crazy*

# Black Boy Maggi

## A Negro writes a bitter autobiography *this story is a lie this man is a trouble maker.*

Photographs for LIFE by GEORGE KARGER

**B**lack Boy is the autobiography of the youth of a 37-year-old Negro named Richard Wright who, in 1940, wrote *Native Son*. That novel, which placed Wright among America's most gifted writers, was a bitter, fictional account of a Negro's revolt against the life imposed on a Negro in the North.

*Black Boy* (Harper, \$2.50) is a bitter, true story of a Negro boy's struggles against the life imposed on his race in the South. Richard Wright was born on a Mississippi plantation and reared by a fanatically religious grandmother.

*If you people don't want hell to start popping you had better stop the niggers driving long. the South have its faults it need to be changed but the niggers can not change it.*

things that happened to him could have happened to many boys brought up in dire poverty anywhere. But Richard was more sensitive and articulate than most. He was also black and brought up in the South. This is what makes *Black Boy* not only a brilliant autobiography but a powerful indictment of a caste system which is one of America's biggest problems.

On the following pages LIFE presents a picture-dramatization of Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. None of the actors in LIFE's story has any connection with incidents in the book.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE 87

condemns a white man for spreading race hatred  
100-157464-22

# NEGROES JOIN PICKET

## Hawkins, Rev. Russell Called 'UnAmerican'; Huey Long Praised

Colored men and women formed part of a tense picket line outside of Philharmonic auditorium Monday night, demonstrating against the use of the hall by Gerald L. K. Smith, leader of the America First movement.

Despite the picket line, however, and despite numerous protests to the management from prominent individuals and organizations, Smith was permitted to speak and to make unsubstantial, fascist charges before an audience of 3,000.

### ROOSEVELT DENOUNCED

The America Firsters declared that Rev. Clayton D. Russell, pastor of the Peoples Independent Church of Christ, is guilty of un-American activities. The same charge was leveled against August F. Hawkins, Los Angeles Assemblyman, co-author of the California Fair Employment Practices Committee, and against Herbert Sorrell, actor.

The late President Roosevelt, Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, Charles Chaplin and Langston Hughes were among those also denounced by Smith.

Roosevelt was accused of wanting to be president of the world. Wallace was asked why he didn't run for vice-president under Joe Stalin, and Charles Chaplin was cited as the heaviest contributor to the Communist party in 1922.

### DEPORT CHAPLIN

Smith recommended that Chaplin be deported, and this suggestion was greeted with loud applause by the audience.

Langston Hughes, well-known poet, was declared to be the type of person who should not be allowed to appear on a college campus.

Smith, in speaking of his past, openly boasted of his association

(Continued on Page Two)

## NAACP Seeks Free P

Urgent requests were especially appointed to the Citizens' Emergency meeting Monday night, fraternal and civic send telegrams to Secretary Stimson; Truman G. Oalde to the secretary members of the California and senate demanding immediate release of Lieuts. Shirley Clinton and Thompson, now under arrest at Goodman Field KY.

The officers were their refusal to part Jim Crow move to officers from the police club, Thompson and are Los Angeles boys known throughout U

Atty. Thomas L. G. SENTINEL that the the War Department Col. Selway, the trouble affair, appeared to be that the War Department conscious of the serious

WRIGHT

156

Not

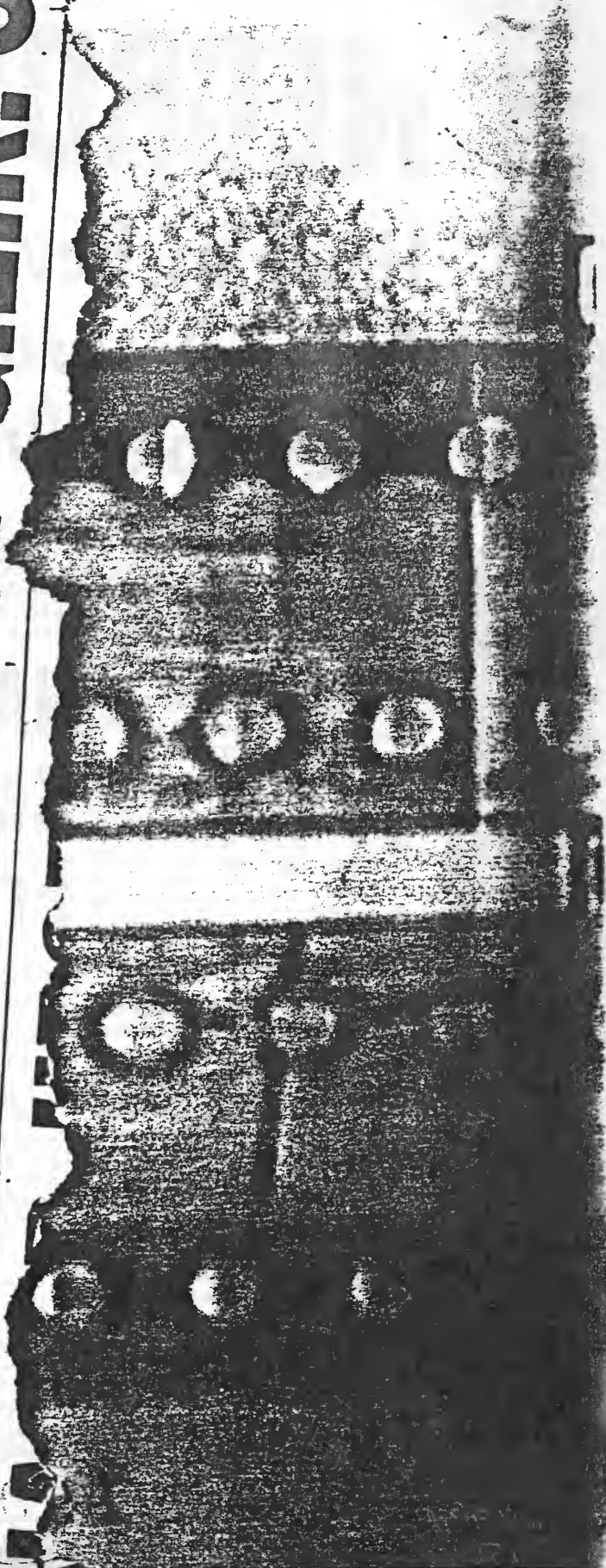
61



W 11 64712 155

*preaching race hatred and allow a negro to do it. this white man is wrong and so is Richard Wright*

# OIM PICKETING OF G.L.K. SMI



...thing is  
William Hampton,  
Courtville, Ill.

### "Black Boy" Not Picture Of Negro

It seems that I've lived in America a million years; it's only a life time. It seems that I've dwelled in the slums as long; that, too, is but a life time. It seems that I've known intimately, a zillion black boys and girls; there have only been those that I have met in the actual extent of my age, over thirty years. — In all my experience as a black American, I've never known a black child like the portrait Richard Wright paints in his recent book, "Black Boy." "Black Boy," like "Native Son," is a problem novel. Its purpose is to uncover the deplorable conditions under which our children exist, thereby stimulating corrective measures. The objective is fine. I hope it works, but "Black Boy" does not represent the average life of the Negro child in America.

On nearly every corner on our neighborhood there was a tavern. As a child I remember "drunks" staggering, heard their vile language, never saw a single Negro in the place or at the open bar. It had developed

t  
u  
col  
here  
limi  
and  
lease  
cil is  
Wl  
pare  
woul  
this  
the s  
on Th  
RA-S  
Gra  
M  
pa  
ir

black and white people in the South.

Sincerely

b7c

general delivery

RECEIVED  
JUL 27 11 35 AM '48  
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE  
F.B.I.  
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

Los Angeles Cal  
July - 4 - 45

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/bce

Dear Sir

do you see this trash here this  
nigger is one of the biggest spreaders of race  
hatred there is in the world he is nothing  
but a black nazi and for that reason we  
people think it is best to ban his books  
as they are doing no good and a lot of harm  
other people have wrote to you folks to  
have this mans books baned. They are to  
filthy and they are giving the whole world  
a wrong empresion about the way the negre  
live in America. we do not know how  
to have undesirable books baned so  
we are writing to you folks so please  
do some thing to put a hand on this lying  
black beast trash. He is doing nothing  
but trying to stir up race trouble he is  
only thirty seven years old we do wish you folks  
would put him in the Army. [redacted]  
Get a copy of his books and you will  
see just how that lying dog is  
trying to anetate trouble between the

RECORDED  
INDEXED

157464-22  
JUL 10 1945

all info  
ENCL.

199

88347

RICHARD WRIGHT

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-22-81 BY SP8 BTJ/6ce

UNCLASSIFIED 100-15944-11  
EX-22 F H I  
30 JUL 6 1945

WRIGHT, R.  
160

215  
anonymous and  
non-specific notation  
necessary



9

LVO  
100-157464-20

RECORDED

July 11, 1945

b7C

Los Angeles, California

I have received your letter of July 1, 1945, and appreciate your interest in making the observations contained therein available to me. In the event you receive additional information which you believe to be of interest to the Federal Bureau of Investigation please feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles Field Division whose address is 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California, telephone Madison 7241.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTG/KC

LVO

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Ladd \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Carson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Hendon \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Pennington \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED 15  
JUL 11 1945  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*Est*  
*HH*

b7C

9

WRIGHT  
R. 161

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

July 11, 1945

[REDACTED]  
Los Angeles, California  
[REDACTED]

*to Bureau at JH*

**670**

I have received your letter of July 1, 1945, and appreciate your interest in making the observations contained therein available to me. In the event you receive additional information which you believe to be of interest to the Federal Bureau of Investigation please feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles Field Division whose address is 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California, telephone Madison 7241.

Sincerely yours,

*J. E. Hoover*  
John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/bc  
*D. Fair*

WRIGHT, R. 162 *765*



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

RECEIVED FOR POST OFFICE  
MOVED TO ADDRESS  
UNKNOWN AT ADDRESS  
NO SUCH NUMBER  
FIRM DISCONTINUED  
CARRIER'S LABEL

Los Angeles, California  
JUL 11 1945  
AM 10  
CALIF.

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JUL 11 1945  
PM 11

b7c

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SPK/BT

RECORDED

LVO  
100-157464 - 20 ✓

July 11, 1945

Mr. James M. McInerney  
Acting Head, Criminal Division  
John Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

PUBLICATIONS OF RICHARD WRIGHT

Enclosed herewith for such consideration as you may deem appropriate  
is a copy of a communication received by this Bureau from [redacted]  
[redacted] Los Angeles, California. The letter of [redacted]  
has been acknowledged by this Bureau.

b7c

cc - Assistant Attorney General  
Herbert Wechsler

Enclosure

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BJB/bce

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Ladd \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Carson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Hendon \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Pennington \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

MAILED 15

★ JUL 11 1945 P.M.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WRIGHT,  
R. 164

b7c

Los Angeles Cal  
July 1-45

FBI = or lit. cont. authority →

w/ing.  
prow to  
bng  
book

Dear Sir

We are writing you people in hope you will be able to have books like black boy and also Native Son by the Negro Richard Wright baned as he is spreading race hatred and causing disunity. If you will look through the mans books you will see how he rant and rave like a mad man. It is terrible and also he use to much filthy expressions the white writers don't do that so why should he. So for the sake of unity please have his books baned. They are doing no good and a lot of harm.

If the Negro author cant write a book without trying to stir up race hatred between the white and colored folks it will be better for them to not write at all.

[REDACTED]

b7c

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BJA/bia

WRIGHT, R. 165

and a lot of harm.

If the negro author  
cant write a book with<sup>out</sup> trying to stir  
up race hatred between the white  
and colord folks it will be better  
for them to not write at all.

CITIZEN  
LIT.  
CMT.

→ 9/24/45  
C

RECEIVED  
JUL 16 11 20 AM '45  
JUL 7 9 26 AM '45  
F B I U S DEPT OF JUSTICE  
RECEIVED SECURITY DIV  
JUL 6 - 7 06 PM '45  
U S DEPT OF JUSTICE



# What The People Say

toxicants at the early age of six. There isn't any question about the undemocratic practices in America. It doesn't matter if one is a resident of the North or South, as Black Boy was, the glaring discrepancies between the ideals and the realities are sufficient to floor the idealist and shock the realist. But it is hard to imagine a life like Black Boy's. It seems that someone would have come into the picture to redeem our faith in human-kind. Perhaps "Black Boy" is that character. In the face of all the circumstances a flicker of ambition kept within him. He even possessed the "foreign" desire to write.

Richard Wright has little pride in his own people for he says:

"Whenever I thought of the essential bleakness of black life in America, I knew that Negroes had never been allowed to catch the full spirit of Western civilization, that they lived somehow in it but not of it. And when I brooded upon the cultural barrenness of black life, I wondered if clean, positive tenderness, love, honor, loyalty, and the capacity to remember were native with man. I asked myself if these human qualities were not fostered, won, struggled and suffered for, preserved in ritual from one generation to another."

As I reflect about the human qualities of Western civilization, I wonder about the "positive tenderness" of the whites. Could there be much genuine feeling within the hearts of a people who could stand by and permit conditions such as exist in "Black Boy" to prevail? What kind of people are these who kept others in slavery, freed them in name only, tried to make sure that they didn't become enlightened through education, signed restrictive covenants to keep them living in the slums, maintained the idea of white supremacy? The only "genuine passion" that I ever saw exhibited was the unleashed spirit that moved the mobs to lynch.

How hollow are the memories of white America that send Gold Star mothers over to Europe to visit the graves of their fallen black sons in Jim-Crow transports! How hollow are the memories of white America that maintain a Jim-Crow army and navy in the second World War. Where is this grand compassion of Western civilization? This "emotional strength," this "clean, positive

tenderness, love, honor, loyalty," leaves me groping in the darkness.

Negroes do feel deeply! Could they have given America folk music otherwise? It is agreed that our masses need education. Through education they will arrive. But I believe that the way of life of the Negro, the humble folk, with the white humble folk, is the only redeeming factor in America. It's the humble soul that makes life livable anywhere. It is he who offers a helping hand in the time of trouble; it is he who practices the golden rule; it is he who doesn't clamor for wealth and position, (the shallow possessions.) . . . In happy contrast to the materialists, the capitalists, the exploiters, he makes a pretty picture. It is he, the meek soul, black and white, who will one day inherit the earth.—Ruth Apilado, Maywood, Ill.

## Sorry For Race Haters

My home has or the larger div my dir me

me st Af po wa of fro ent she I poss was her proc He befor she gan Roy frien Roy him. Suc seem hate had tre of r miri beg droj

uttering heel.

Leaving later, I ment in toward two be cific, o. own you in the these fo persecut whose o. tor saw of the b. In son ashamed bit sorry nois.

## Lauds For Fe

I am a page of sue of M. "Is the tory?" It is

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8BT/gh

WRIGHT, R.  
167

D U C F

100 - 157464 - 19



eye sight. we colored people want Richard Wright's  
books banned if he cant write a story with out  
trying to agitate race trouble we want him  
to pick him self a new vocation. Just get  
a copy of his books and go through them  
we dont see why he isnt in the Army any  
way. If he went to India or some other place  
and saw how horrible those people live then  
he would see how far advanced we are.  
After all we colored people are doing the best  
we can if you would get a copy of the negro  
hand book for 1942 you would see just how  
well we are doing. we are only a small race of  
people. we colored people are very discouraged  
and that is the reason sixty million little bitty  
Japanese in Japan can fight all most two Billion  
people with out a allie and hold out so long.  
Because that Billion colored people are on the  
point of giving up. After all this is not our war  
and if we win we <sup>lose</sup> <sup>nothing</sup> I suppose there is  
nothing to do but just say to hell with the whole  
bloody mess.

this is from that poor old fool book Black boy  
this is enough to provoke the devil

Los Angeles Calif

June 18 - 45

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED

HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8BRY/bce

Dear sir

116-447

Richard Wright the negro who wrote  
Black boy and native son books are doing no good  
and a lot of harm they are causing disunity  
and spreading race hatred and if you people dont  
want America tore up the same as Germany  
you had better put a stop to such people as that  
poor old ass of a Southern Senator with his  
back to Africa move ment and such old fools as  
that poor crazy old Richard Wright. We colored people  
are good natured all we want is justice a good  
job with good pay for work well done. Every time  
we turn around some one is complaining nagging  
constantly ~~criticizing~~ criticizing every thing we do  
Richard Wright seem to be run happy in America  
so we wish to god he would leave and go some  
place else for he is getting on our nerves.  
I and all the other colored people know that  
ninety percent of the trash that he put in  
his books are lies, but if people in the  
should get a hold of Black boy I'm awfull  
afraid Uncle Sam's face is going to be red  
for you cant rule a German if you cant  
rule America. And the lies that poor sick  
Richard Wright put in his books sure



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Re: *Wright, R.*

WILEYWOOD,  
CALIF.

Not in Director's

Not in  
R  
W

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JUL 7 1945  
10AM

WILEYWOOD,  
CALIF.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE *8-25-81* BY *SP1 BTJ/...*



PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO AVOID  
PAYMENT OF POSTAGE

WRIGHT, R. 170

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

July 6, 1945

[REDACTED]  
Los Angeles, California  
[REDACTED]

*No such address  
vsl b7c*

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated June 18, 1945, with enclosure.

The material which you have submitted has been carefully reviewed and I want to thank you for your interest and courtesy in writing to this Bureau.

In the event you receive additional information which you believe to be of interest to the FBI, I want you to feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles field Division which is located at 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

Sincerely yours,

*J. E. Hoover*

John Edgar Hoover  
Director



DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BJA  
165  
57 JUL 28 1945

*File-5-172*

*WRIGHT  
871*

RECORDED 100-157464-19

EX-8

July 6, 1945

[REDACTED]  
Los Angeles, California  
[REDACTED]

b7c

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated June 18, 1945, with enclosure.

The material which you have submitted has been carefully reviewed and I want to thank you for your interest and courtesy in writing to this Bureau.

In the event you receive additional information which you believe to be of interest to the FBI, I want you to feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles field Division which is located at 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTG/bce

Mr. Tolson  
Mr. E. A. Tamm  
Mr. Clegg  
Mr. Coffey  
Mr. Glavin  
Mr. Ladd  
Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Rosen  
Mr. Tracy  
Mr. Carson  
Mr. Egan  
Mr. Hendon  
Mr. Pennington  
Mr. Quinn Tamm  
Mr. Nease  
Miss Gandy

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED

JUL 13 1945

72

WRIGHT, R. 173

JUN 30 1945  
JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

June 30, 1945

[Redacted]  
Los Angeles, California  
[Redacted]

b7C

I desire to acknowledge your letter of June 22, 1945, with enclosure.

You may be assured that the content of your communication has been very carefully noted and I want to thank you for your interest in communicating with me.

If in the future you should obtain information which you feel is of value to this Bureau, please feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles Field Division which is located at 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California.

Sincerely yours,

J. E. Hoover  
John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP-8/BJC



100-157464-17  
JUN 30 1945

VB

b7c

100-157464-17

June 30, 1945

EX-61

[REDACTED]  
Los Angeles, California  
[REDACTED]

b7c

I desire to acknowledge your letter of June 22, 1945, with enclosure.

You may be assured that the content of your communication has been very carefully noted and I want to thank you for your interest in communicating with me.

If in the future you should obtain information which you feel is of value to this Bureau, please feel free to communicate directly with the Special Agent in Charge of our Los Angeles Field Division which is located at 900 Security Building, Los Angeles 13, California.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTG/bce

*Handwritten signature*

MAILED

JUN 2 1945  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. E. A. Tamm
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Coffey
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Carson
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Hendon
- Mr. Pennington
- Mr. Quinn Tamm
- Mr. Nease
- Miss Gandy

WRIGHT  
R. H.

*Handwritten initials*

El... wens in ...  
Washington, reporter

If enough such books  
are written, if enough  
millions of people read  
them, maybe, someday,  
there will be a greater  
understanding and a  
more true democracy."

—Orville Prescott,  
N. Y. Times



# BLACK BOY

By RICHARD WRIGHT  
Author of *Native Son*

"A deeply disturbing document  
in race relations."—Howard  
Mumford Jones, *Saturday Re-  
view of Literature*

"Possibly the most sensational  
confession of an American boy-  
hood ever put on paper."—  
Harry Hansen, N. Y. World-  
Telegram

A Book-of-the-Month Club  
Selection for March  
At all bookstores • \$2.50

one does not offer of this  
life books and the want

they are spreading race hatred and causing disunity

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/bee

WRIGHT, R. 175

100 - 127464 - 17



Believe me mister we are tired and disgusted and discouraged. And if you don't want America behind the eighth ball you had better put a stop to some of this run American literature. Because we want peace and not having to be dragged.

Don't do that for god sake but that Adole pated Saps looks for they are driving us nuts. And besides he put to much filth in his books. you know what Adolph Hitler says. I evade and conquer. Well if you don't want that to happen in America you had better put a stop to these American

uncle Toms with there type writer from writing so much belly aching hog wash. Because take it from me mister there are only sixty million people in Japan and she is fighting all most 2 Billion people one billion of those people are colored. And if those Billion colored people wasent disgusted and discouraged this war could have been over long ago.

We colored people don't mind the truth but we do hate lies or any thing that destint to keep us from peace of mind. The back stabbin Southern white people are on one side nagging send the colored people back to Africa and a bunch of damn fools like Richard Wright are on the other side lying, complaining criticizing the billion colored people say - The



VB  
100-157464 -16

RECORDED

EX-18

SAC, New York

May 7, 1945

John Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
SECURITY MATTER - C

Reference is made to your letter of April 17, 1945, in the above captioned matter.

In view of the militant attitude of the subject toward the Negro problem, as set forth in your letter of February 26, 1945, it is believed that you should submit a recommendation for the preparation of a Security Index Card in this case.

You may consider this letter as the Bureau's approval of such a recommendation and you should place a Security Index Card in your files at this time.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-91 BY SP-8/BJS/ka

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

MAILED 8

MAY - 7 1945 P.M.

Mr. Tolson  
Mr. E. A. Tamm  
Mr. Clegg  
Mr. Coffey  
Mr. Glavin  
Mr. Ladd  
Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Rosen  
Mr. Tracy  
Mr. Carson  
Mr. Egan  
Mr. Hendon  
Mr. Pennington  
Mr. Quinn  
Mr. Nease  
Miss Gandy

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WRIGHT, R.  
177

MAY 12 1945

Los Angeles Cal

June 22-45

Dear Sir. RICHARD WRIGHT

Richard Wright the negro who wrote 12 million black voices and Black boy books should be baned as they are spreading race hatred and causing disunity.

We seem to feel as because of American prejudice that the American negro is living under horrible conditions. Well I am an American negro and proud of it because we colored people in America have come a long ways in the last seventy years. Only in America have the negro been as successful.

If you get a copy of the negro hand book of 1942 and turn over to page any of its pages you will see just how successful that we colored people are. Richard Wright doesn't approve of our way of life we wish you would put him in the funny on the first line in the Pacific theater of war and if a Jap kill him he's a medal. And if you

DATE 8-25-81 BY 508679 (baw)

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

RECORDED & INDEXED

JUN 26 1945

ack 6-30-45

676

WRIGHT, R. 178

STANDARD FORM NO. 64

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

HGF  
100-41674

TO : Director, FBI

DATE: April 17, 1945

FROM : SAC, New York

SUBJECT: RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT  
SECURITY MATTER - C  
(Bureau File 100-157464)

Reference is made to New York letter to the Bureau dated February 26, 1945 in the captioned matter wherein it was pointed out that in view of the subject's public break with the Communist Party, he is no longer being carried as a key figure by the New York Field Office, but that a Security Index card on him was being maintained by this office. This statement was made in error in view of the fact that although the New York Office recommended to the Bureau by letter dated June 28, 1944 that a Security Index Card be prepared on the subject, no authorization was actually received by the Bureau to prepare such a card.

Therefore, no Security Index card is being maintained in the New York Office on the subject unless contrary advice is received from the Bureau.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY 98012/6e

WRIGHT, R.  
179

RECORDED 100-157464-16

EX-26

Index + file

PRESCOTT

**R**ICHARD WRIGHT is the author of one of the most widely read and hotly debated novels of recent years, "Native Son," an acknowledged leader of his race. But the way was long and the road was rocky. Not very many years ago he was just "a black boy in Mississippi," which means few men in the world have begun life under a burden of



Richard Wright

graver handicaps or faced more difficult obstacles. That he has gone so far, accomplished so much, entitles Mr. Wright to an honored rank among that traditionally American select group, the "self-made men." His success story does him great credit. The troubles he knew in his childhood and youth were terrible, the wounds he received deep. He carries indelible scars and still burns with bitter fury. The life he knew as a child is not over. It has not changed. Hundreds of thousands of other little black boys are enduring it today. Such a life is usually completely outside the comprehension of white Americans, either Southern or Northern. But those who care to can now share it, in Mr. Wright's "Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth."

This is a story from America's own lower depths. No nostalgic memories of childhood are these, no sentimental yearnings for innocent years when the hills were so much higher. Mr. Wright's childhood was an obscene and monstrous nightmare, a malign inferno that might well have destroyed him utterly. He survived, but not unscathed. "Black Boy" is not the work of an objective artist or of an open mind. It could not have been. The neuroses, the over-emphasis, the lack of balance and the emotion recollected in turmoil are the bitter fruit of an old injustice.

**Shows Harsh Dramatic Power**

Mr. Wright in this explosive autobiography does not suggest any constructive means for improving the lot of the Negro in this country. Like Lillian Smith, he can only display suffering and cruelty with harsh dramatic power, he can only arouse anger and sympathy. If enough such books are written, if enough millions of people read them, maybe, some day, in the fullness of time, there will be a greater understanding and a more true democracy.

Richard Wright grew up in the slums of Mem-

**\*BLACK BOY: A Record of Childhood and Youth. By Richard Wright. 228 pages. Harper. \$2.50.**

phis and in the rural slums of Mississippi near Jackson. His father deserted his mother, so the poverty he knew was double the usual lot. The two dominant influences of his childhood were hunger and fear, a gnawing hunger that kept him weak and half-starved and a fear that grew and multiplied and filled his entire life. He feared his mother's anger, the whippings of his uncles and aunts, the abuse of other children, ghosts, white men with their inexplicable and capricious cruelties, fear itself. Terror was his companion night and day, violence the norm of all experience. Foul language and foul habits, ignorance and superstition, primitive religious fanaticism surrounded him on all sides. The proud, sensitive, intelligent child looked up from below at a grotesque, outrageous world.

Some of the evils he knew were caused by poverty and ignorance alone and would not have been much different in Ireland or Iran. But even these evils were intensified by the shibboleth of color and many others were caused by race alone. Mr. Wright's uncle was murdered by a white man and no one dared even to protest. A boyhood acquaintance was lynched. He learned to be servile and obsequious, to say "sir" to drunken and contemptible white men, to conceal his thoughts and emotions beneath a mask of humble good humor and deference. Not to do so, to forget the "sir" or the "mister," to aspire to learn a skilled trade, to show resentment of sneers, condescension and abuse, was to invite "trouble." And trouble could mean death.

**Author Distorts Bleak Story**

"Black Boy" only takes Mr. Wright into his late teens when he escaped to Chicago. His experiences there and in radical politics will doubtless be material for another book. It could conceivably be an intellectually more interesting book, one more concerned with thought and ideas. But it could hardly be a more emotionally dreadful one. Part of the raw shock of "Black Boy" is caused by Mr. Wright's excessive determination to omit nothing, to emphasize mere filth. This springs from a lack of artistic discrimination and selectivity. He has not added to the bleak tragedy of his story; he has only distorted it and confused it with such material.

It is also obvious in reading "Black Boy," and Mr. Wright admits it, that his is not a typical story. He felt isolated from Negroes as well as from whites; other Negroes resented their lot but did not feel at all so acutely as he did. Perhaps with the hindsight of the years in which he has brooded and with a natural literary instinct to capitalize and dramatize his emotions Mr. Wright has exaggerated his sufferings. It would be only human if he had.

"Black Boy" has little subtlety, little light and shade, no restraint. It is written in a continuously strained and feverish manner. It is over-written. But it is powerful, moving and horrifying. It is certain to be extravagantly praised and roundly condemned. It will be widely read.

This is a clipping from page 21 of the New York Times for

100-15141-1  
NOT RECORDED  
86 MAR 20 1945

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/bce

Feb. 28, 1945  
Clipped at the Seat of  
Government.

WRIGHT, R. 180



called up hard facts. He painted a horrible but masterful picture of Fascism's aggression in Germany, Italy, and Japan.

I accepted the reason why the trial began in this manner. It was imperative that here be postulated against what or whom Ross's crimes had been committed. Therefore there had to be established in the minds of all present a vivid picture of mankind under oppression. And it was a true picture. Perhaps no organization on earth, save the Communist Party, possessed so detailed a knowledge of how workers lived, for its sources of information stemmed directly from the workers themselves.

The next speaker discussed the role of the Soviet Union as the world's lone workers' state—how the Soviet Union was hemmed in by enemies, how the Soviet Union was trying to industrialize itself, what sacrifices it was making to help workers of the world to steer a path toward peace through the idea of collective security.

The facts presented so far were as true as any facts could be in this uncertain world. Yet no one word had been said of the accused, who sat listening like any other member. The time had not yet come to include him and his crimes in this picture of global struggle. An absolute had first to be established in the minds of the comrades so that they could measure the success or failure of their deeds by it.

Finally a speaker came forward and spoke of Chicago's South Side, its Negro population, their suffering and handicaps, linking all that also to the world struggle. Then still another speaker followed and described the tasks of the Communist Party of the South Side. At last, the world, the national, and the local pictures had been fused into one overwhelming drama of moral struggle in which everybody in the hall was participating. This presentation had lasted for more than three hours, but it had enthroned a new sense of reality in the hearts of those present, a sense of man on earth. With the exception of the church and its myths and legends, there was no agency in the world so capable of making men feel the earth and the people upon it as the Communist Party.

Toward evening the direct charges against Ross were made, not by the leaders of the party, but by Ross's friends, those who knew him best! It was crushing. Ross wilted. His emotions could not withstand the weight of the moral pressure. No one was terrorized into giving information against him. They gave it willingly, citing dates, conversations, scenes. The black mass of Ross's wrongdoing emerged slowly and irrefutably.

The moment came for Ross to defend himself. I had been told that he had arranged for friends to

specify in his behalf, but he called upon no one. He stood, trembling; he tried to talk and his words would not come. The hall was as still as death. Guilt was written in every pore of his black skin. His hands shook. He held on to the edge of the table to keep on his feet. His personality, his sense of himself, had been obliterated. Yet he could not have been so humbled unless he had shared and accepted the vision that had crushed him, the common vision that bound us all together.

"Comrades," he said in a low, charged voice, "I'm guilty of all the charges, all of them."

His voice broke in a sob. No one prodded him. No one tortured him. No one threatened him. He was free to go out of the hall and never see another Communist. But he did not want to. He could not. The vision of a communal world had sunk down into his soul and it would never leave him until life left him. He talked on, outlining how he had erred, how he would reform.

I knew, as I sat there, that there were many people who thought they knew life who had been skeptical of the Moscow trials. But they could not have been skeptical had they witnessed this astonishing trial. Ross had not been doped; he had been awakened. It was not a fear of the Communist Party that had made him confess, but a fear of the punishment that he would exact of himself that made him tell of his wrongdoings. The Communists had talked to him until they had given him new eyes with which to see his own crime. And then they sat back and listened to him tell how he had erred. He was one with all the members there, regardless of race or color; his heart was theirs and their hearts were his; and when a man reaches that state of kinship with others, that degree of oneness, or when a trial has made him kin after he has been sundered from them by wrongdoing, then he must rise and say, out of a sense of the deepest morality in the world: "I'm guilty. Forgive me."

This, to me, was a spectacle of glory; and yet, because it had condemned me, because it was blind and ignorant, I felt that it was a spectacle of horror. The blindness of their limited lives—lives truncated and impoverished by the oppression they had suffered long before they had ever heard of Communism—made them think that I was with their enemies. American life had so corrupted their consciousness that they were unable to recognize their friends when they saw them. I knew that if they had held state power I should have been declared guilty of treason and my execution would have followed. And I knew that they felt, with all the strength of their black blindness, that they were right.



DeSheim thought my advice sound and, accordingly, he assembled the company and told them that they had a right to petition against him if they wanted to, but that he thought any misunderstandings that existed could be settled smoothly.

"Who told you that we were getting up a petition?" a black man demanded.

DeSheim looked at me and stammered wordlessly.

"There's an Uncle Tom in the theater!" a black girl yelled.

After the meeting a delegation of Negro men came to my office and took out their pocketknives and flashed them in my face.

"You get the hell off this job before we cut your bellybutton out!" they said.

I telephoned my white friends in the Works Progress Administration: "Transfer me at once to another job, or I'll be murdered."

Within twenty-four hours DeSheim and I were given our papers. We shook hands and went our separate ways.

I was transferred to a white experimental theatrical company as a publicity agent and I resolved to keep my ideas to myself, or, better, to write them down and not attempt to translate them into reality.

## 12

One evening a group of Negro Communists called at my home and asked to speak to me in strict secrecy. I took them into my room and locked the door.

"Dick," they began abruptly, "the party wants you to attend a meeting Sunday."

"Why?" I asked. "I'm no longer a member."

"That's all right. They want you to be present," they said.

"Communists don't speak to me on the street," I said. "Now, why do you want me at a meeting?"

They hedged. They did not want to tell me.

"If you can't tell me, then I can't come," I said.

They whispered among themselves and finally decided to take me into their confidence.

"Dick, Ross is going to be tried," they said.

"For what?"

They recited a long list of political offenses of which they alleged that he was guilty.

"But what has that got to do with me?"

"If you come, you'll find out," they said.

"I'm not that naive," I said. I was suspicious now. Were they trying to lure me to a trial and expel me? "This trial might turn out to be mine."

They swore that they had no intention of placing me on trial, that the party merely wanted me to

observe Ross's trial so that I might learn what happened to "enemies of the working class."

As they talked, my old love of witnessing something new came over me. I wanted to see this trial, but I did not want to risk being placed on trial myself.

"Listen," I told them. "I'm not guilty of Nealsen's charges. If I showed up at this trial, it would seem that I am."

"No, it won't. Please come."

"All right. But, listen. If I'm tricked, I'll fight. You hear? I don't trust Nealsen. I'm not a politician and I cannot anticipate all the funny moves of a man who spends his waking hours plotting."

Ross's trial took place that following Sunday afternoon. Comrades stood inconspicuously on guard about the meeting hall, at the doors, down the street, and along the hallways. When I appeared, I was ushered in quickly. I was tense. It was a rule that once you had entered a meeting of this kind you could not leave until the meeting was over; it was feared that you might go to the police and denounce them all.

Ross, the accused, sat alone at a table in the front of the hall, his face distraught. I felt sorry for him; yet I could not escape feeling that he enjoyed this. For him, this was perhaps the highlight of an otherwise bleak existence.

In trying to grasp why Communists hated intellectuals, my mind was led back again to the accounts I had read of the Russian Revolution. There had existed in Old Russia millions of poor, ignorant people who were exploited by a few educated, arrogant noblemen, and it became natural for the Russian Communists to associate betrayal with intellectualism. But there existed in the Western world an element that baffled and frightened the Communist Party: the prevalence of self-achieved literacy. Even a Negro, entrapped by ignorance and exploitation, — as I had been, — could, if he had the will and the love for it, learn to read and to understand the world in which he lived. And it was these people that the Communists could not understand.

The trial began in a quiet, informal manner. The comrades acted like a group of neighbors sitting in judgment upon one of their kind who had stolen a chicken. Anybody could ask and get the floor. There was absolute freedom of speech. Yet the meeting had an amazingly formal structure of its own, a structure that went as deep as the desire of men to live together.

A member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party rose and gave a description of the world situation. He spoke without emotion and

I was not able to know if my statement reached Nealson. There was no public outcry against me, but in the ranks of the party itself a storm broke loose and I was branded a traitor, an unstable personality, and one whose faith had failed.

My comrades had known me, my family, my friends; they, God knows, had known my aching poverty. But they had never been able to conquer their fear of the individual way in which I acted and lived, an individuality which life had seared into my bones.

# II

I WAS transferred by the relief authorities from the South Side Boys' Club to the Federal Negro Theater to work as a publicity agent. There were days when I was acutely hungry for the incessant analyses that went on among the comrades, but whenever I heard news of the party's inner life, it was of charges and countercharges, reprisals and counterreprisals.

The Federal Negro Theater, for which I was doing publicity, had run a series of ordinary plays, all of which had been revamped to "Negro style," with jungle scenes, spirituals, and all. For example, the skinny white woman who directed it, an elderly missionary type, would take a play whose characters were white, whose theme dealt with the Middle Ages, and recast it in terms of Southern Negro life with overtones of African backgrounds. Contemporary plays dealing realistically with Negro life were spurned as being controversial. There were about forty Negro actors and actresses in the theater, bolling about, yearning, disgruntled.

What a waste of talent, I thought. Here was an opportunity for the production of a worth-while Negro drama and no one was aware of it. I studied the situation, then laid the matter before white friends of mine who held influential positions in the Works Progress Administration. I asked them to replace the white woman — including her quaint aesthetic notions — with someone who knew the Negro and the theater. They promised me that they would act.

Within a month the white woman director had been transferred. We moved from the South Side to the Loop and were housed in a first-rate theater. I successfully recommended Charles DeSheim, a talented Jew, as director. DeSheim and I held long talks during which I outlined what I thought could be accomplished. I urged that our first offering should be a bill of three one-act plays, including Paul Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun*, a grim, poetical, powerful one-acter dealing with chain-gang conditions in the South.

I was happy. At last I was in a position to make suggestions and have them acted upon. I was convinced that we had a rare chance to build a genuine Negro theater. I convoked a meeting and introduced DeSheim to the Negro company, telling them that he was a man who knew the theater, who would lead them toward serious dramatics. DeSheim made a speech wherein he said that he was not at the theater to direct it, but to help the Negroes to direct it. He spoke so simply and eloquently that they rose and applauded him.

I then proudly passed out copies of Paul Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun* to all members of the company. DeSheim assigned reading parts. I sat down to enjoy adult Negro dramatics. But something went wrong. The Negroes stammered and faltered in their lines. Finally they stopped reading altogether. DeSheim looked frightened. One of the Negro actors rose.

"Mr. DeSheim," he began, "we think this play is indecent. We don't want to act in a play like this before the American public. I don't think any such conditions exist in the South. I lived in the South and I never saw any chain gangs. Mr. DeSheim, we want a play that will make the public love us."

"What kind of play do you want?" DeSheim asked them.

They did not know. I went to the office and looked up their records and found that most of them had spent their lives playing cheap vaudeville. I had thought that they played vaudeville because the legitimate theater was barred to them, and now it turned out they wanted none of the legitimate theater, that they were scared spitless at the prospects of appearing in a play that the public might not like, even though they did not understand that public and had no way of determining its likes or dislikes.

I felt — but only temporarily — that perhaps the whites were right, that Negroes were children and would never grow up. DeSheim informed the company that he would produce any play they liked, and they sat like frightened mice, possessing no words to make known their vague desires.

When I arrived at the theater a few mornings later, I was horrified to find that the company had drawn up a petition demanding the ousting of DeSheim. I was asked to sign the petition and I refused.

"Don't you know your friends?" I asked them.

They glared at me. I called DeSheim to the theater and we went into a frantic conference.

"What must I do?" he asked.

"Take them into your confidence," I said. "Let them know that it is their right to petition for a redress of their grievances."



"It's easy. You can learn," he said.

I was in the midst of writing a novel and he was calling me from it to tabulate the price of groceries.

"He doesn't think much of what I'm trying to do," I thought.

"Comrade Nealson," I said, "a writer who hasn't written anything worth while is a most doubtful person. Now, I'm in that category. Yet I think I can write. I don't want to ask for special favors, but I'm in the midst of a book which I hope to complete in six months or so. Let me convince myself that I'm wrong about my hankering to write and then I'll be with you all the way."

"Dick," he said, turning in his chair and waving his hand as though to brush away an insect that was annoying him, "you've got to get to the masses of people."

"You've seen some of my work," I said. "Isn't it just barely good enough to warrant my being given a chance?"

"The party can't deal with your feelings," he said.

"Maybe I don't belong in the party," I stated it in full.

"Oh, no! Don't say that," he said, snorting. He looked at me. "You're blunt."

"I put things the way I feel them," I said. "I want to start in right with you. I've had too damn much crazy trouble in the party."

He laughed and lit a cigarette.

"Dick," he said, shaking his head, "the trouble with you is that you've been around with those white artists on the North Side too much. You even talk like 'em. You've got to know your own people."

"I think I know them," I said, realizing that I could never really talk with him. "I've been inside of three fourths of the Negroes' homes on the South Side."

"But you've got to work with 'em," he said.

"I was working with Ross until I was suspected of being a spy," I said.

"Dick," he spoke seriously now, "the party has decided that you are to accept this task."

I was silent. I knew the meaning of what he had said. A decision was the highest injunction that a Communist could receive from his party, and to break a decision was to break the effectiveness of the party's ability to act. In principle I heartily agreed with this, for I knew that it was impossible for working people to forge instruments of political power until they had achieved unity of action. Oppressed for centuries, divided, hopeless, corrupted, misled, they were cynical—as I had once been—and the Communist method of unity

had been found historically to be the only means of achieving discipline. In short, Nealson had asked me directly if I were a Communist or not. I wanted to be a Communist, but my kind of Communist. I wanted to shape people's feelings, awaken their hearts. But I could not tell Nealson that; he would only have snorted.

"I'll organize the committee and turn it over to someone else," I suggested.

"You don't want to do this, do you?" he asked.

"No," I said firmly.

"What would you like to do on the South Side, then?"

"I'd like to organize Negro artists," I said.

"But the party doesn't need that now," he said.

I rose, knowing that he had no intention of letting me go after I had organized the committee. I wanted to tell him that I was through, but I was not ready to bring matters to a head. I went out, angry with myself, angry with him, angry with the party. Well, I had not broken the decision, but neither had I accepted it wholly. I had dodged, trying to save time for writing, time to think.

## 10

MY TASK consisted in attending meetings until the late hours of the night, taking part in discussions, or lending myself generally along with other Communists in leading the people of the South Side. We debated the housing situation, the best means of forcing the city to authorize open hearings on conditions among Negroes. I gritted my teeth as the daily value of pork chops was tabulated, longing to be at home with my writing.

Nealson was cleverer than I and he confronted me before I had a chance to confront him. I was summoned one night to meet Nealson and a "friend." When I arrived at a South Side hotel I was introduced to a short, yellow man who carried himself like Napoleon. He wore glasses, kept his full lips pursed as though he were engaged in perpetual thought. He swaggered when he walked. He spoke slowly, precisely, trying to charge each of his words with more meaning than the words were able to carry. He talked of trivial things in lofty tones. He said that his name was Smith, that he was from Washington, that he planned to launch a national organization among Negroes to federalize all existing Negro institutions so as to achieve a broad unity of action. The three of us sat at a table, facing one another. I knew that another and last offer was about to be made to me, and if I did not accept it, there would be open warfare.

"Wright, how would you like to go to Switzerland?" Smith asked with dramatic suddenness.

"I'd like it," I said. "But I'm tied up with work now."

"You can drop that," Nealson said. "This is important."

"What would I do in Switzerland?" I asked.

"You'll go as a youth delegate," Smith said. "From there you can go to the Soviet Union."

"Much as I'd like to, I'm afraid I can't make it," I said honestly. "I simply cannot drop the writing I'm doing now."

We sat looking at one another, smoking silently.

"Has Nealson told you how I feel?" I asked Smith.

Smith did not answer. He stared at me a long time, then spat: "Wright, you're a fool!"

I rose. Smith turned away from me. A breath more of anger and I should have driven my fist into his face. Nealson laughed sheepishly, snorting.

"Was that necessary?" I asked, trembling.

I stood recalling how, in my boyhood, I would have fought until blood ran had anyone said anything like that to me. But I was a man now and master of my rage, able to control the surging emotions. I put on my hat and walked to the door.

"Keep cool," I said to myself. "Don't let this get out of hand."

"This is good-bye," I said.

I attended the next unit meeting and asked for a place on the agenda, which was readily granted. Nealson was there. Evans was there. Ed Green was there. When my time came to speak, I said:—

"Comrades, for the past two years I've worked daily with most of you. Despite this, I have for some time found myself in a difficult position in the party. What has caused this difficulty is a long story which I do not care to recite now; it would serve no purpose. But I tell you honestly that I think I've found a solution of my difficulty. I am proposing here tonight that my membership be dropped from the party rolls. No ideological differences impel me to say this. I simply do not wish to be bound any longer by the party's decisions. I should like to retain my membership in those organizations in which the party has influence, and I shall comply with the party's program in those organizations. I hope that my word will be accepted in the spirit in which they are said. Perhaps sometime in the future I can meet and talk with the leaders of the party as to what tasks I can best perform."

I sat down amid a profound silence. The Negro secretary of the meeting looked frightened, glancing at Nealson, Evans, and Ed Green.

"Is there any discussion on Comrade Wright's statement?" the secretary asked finally.

"I move that discussion on Wright's statement be deferred," Nealson said.

A quick vote confirmed Nealson's motion. I looked about the silent room, then reached for my hat and rose.

"I should like to go now," I said.

No one said anything. I walked to the door and out into the night and a heavy burden seemed to lift from my shoulders. I was free. And I had done it in a decent and forthright manner. I had not been bitter. I had not raked up a single recrimination. I had attacked no one. I had disavowed nothing.

The next night two Negro Communists called at my home. They pretended to be ignorant of what had happened at the unit meeting. Patiently I explained what had occurred.

"Your story does not agree with what Nealson says," they said, revealing the motive of their visit.

"And what does Nealson say?" I asked.

"He says that you are in league with a Trotskyite group, and that you made an appeal for other party members to follow you in leaving the party."

"What?" I gasped. "That's not true. I asked that my membership be dropped. I raised no political issues." What did this mean? I sat pondering. "Look, maybe I ought to make my break with the party clean. If Nealson's going to act this way, I'll resign."

"You can't resign," they told me.

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"No one can resign from the Communist Party."

I looked at them and laughed.

"You're talking crazy," I said.

"Nealson would expel you publicly; cut the ground from under your feet if you resigned," they said. "People would think that something was wrong if someone like you quit here on the South Side."

I was angry. Was the party so weak and uncertain of itself that it could not accept what I had said at the unit meeting? Who thought up such tactics? Then, suddenly, I understood. These were the secret, underground tactics of the political movement of the Communists under the tsars of Old Russia! The Communist Party felt that it had to assassinate me morally merely because I did not want to be bound by its decisions. I saw now that my comrades were acting out a fantasy that had no relation whatever to the reality of their environment.

"Tell Nealson that if he fights me, then, by God, I'll fight him," I said. "If he leaves this damn thing where it is, then all right. If he thinks I won't fight him publicly, he's crazy!"



He suffered from asthma and would snort at unexpected intervals. Now and then he would punctuate his flow of words by taking a nip from a bottle of whiskey. He had traveled half around the world and his talk was pitted with vague allusions to European cities. I met him in his apartment, listened to him intently, observed him minutely, for I knew that I was facing one of the leaders of World Communism.

"Hello, Wright," he snorted. "I've heard about you."

As we shook hands he burst into a loud, seemingly senseless laugh; and as he guffawed I could not tell whether his mirth was directed at me or was meant to hide his uneasiness.

"I hope what you've heard about me is good," I parried.

"Sit down," he laughed again, waving me to a chair. "Yes, they tell me you write."

"I try to," I said.

"You can write," he snorted. "I read that article you wrote for the *New Masses* about Joe Louis. Good stuff. First political treatment of sports we've ever had. Ha-ha."

I waited. I had thought that I should encounter a man of ideas, but he was not that. Then perhaps he was a man of action? But that was not indicated either.

"They tell me that you are a friend of Ross," he shot at me.

I paused before answering. He had not asked me directly, but had hinted in a neutral, teasing way. Ross, I had been told, was slated for expulsion from the party on the ground that he was "anti-leadership"; and if a member of the Communist International was asking me if I was a friend of a man about to be expelled, he was indirectly asking me if I was loyal or not.

"Ross is not particularly a friend of mine," I said frankly. "But I know him well; in fact, quite well."

"If he isn't your friend, how do you happen to know him so well?" he asked, laughing to soften the sharp threat of his question.

"I was writing an account of his life and I know him as well, perhaps, as anybody," I told him.

"I heard about that," he said. "Wright. Ha-ha. Say, let me call you Dick, hunh?"

"Go ahead," I said.

"Dick," he said, "Ross is a nationalist." He paused to let the weight of his accusation sink in. He meant that Ross's militancy was extreme. "We Communists don't dramatize Negro nationalism," he said in a voice that laughed, accused, and withdrew.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"We're not advertising Ross." He spoke directly now.

"We're talking about two different things," I said. "You seem worried about my making Ross popular because he is your political opponent. But I'm not concerned about Ross's politics at all. The man struck me as one who typified certain traits of the Negro migrant. I've already sold a story based upon an incident in his life."

Neelson became excited.

"What was the incident?" he asked.

"Some trouble he got into when he was thirteen years old," I said.

"Oh, I thought it was political," he said, shrugging.

"But I'm telling you that you are wrong about that," I explained. "I'm not trying to fight you with my writing. I've no political ambitions. You must believe that. I'm trying to depict Negro life."

"Have you finished writing about Ross?"

"No," I said. "I dropped the idea. Our party members were suspicious of me and were afraid to talk." He laughed.

"Dick," he began, "we're short of forces. We're facing a grave crisis."

"The party's always facing a crisis," I said.

His smile left and he stared at me.

"You're not cynical, are you, Dick?" he asked.

"No," I said. "But it's the truth. Each week, each month there's a crisis."

"You're a funny guy," he said, laughing, snorting again. "But we've got a job to do. We're altering our work. Fascism's the danger, the danger now to all people."

"I understand," I said.

"We've got to defeat the Fascists," he said, snorting from asthma. "We've discussed you and know your abilities. We want you to work with us. We've got to crash out of our narrow way of working and get our message to the church people, students, club people, professionals, middle class."

"I've been called names," I said softly. "Is that crashing out of the narrow way?"

"Forget that," he said.

He had not denied the name-calling. That meant that, if I did not obey him, the name-calling would begin again.

"I don't know if I fit into things," I said openly.

"We want to trust you with an important assignment," he said.

"What do you want me to do?"

"We want you to organize a committee against the high cost of living."

"The high cost of living?" I exclaimed. "What do I know about such things?"



# I TRIED TO BE A COMMUNIST

by RICHARD WRIGHT

9

When the John Reed clubs now dissolved, I was free of all party relations. I avoided unit meetings for fear of being subjected to discipline. Occasionally a Negro Communist—defying the code that enjoined him to shun suspect elements—came to my home and informed me of the current charges that Communists were bringing against one another. To my astonishment I heard that Buddy Neelson had branded me a “smuggler of reaction.”

Buddy Neelson was the Negro who had formulated the Communist position for the American Negro; he had made speeches in the Kremlin; he had spoken before Stalin himself.

“Why does Neelson call me that?” I asked.

“He says that you are a petty bourgeois degenerate,” I was told.

“What does that mean?”

“He says that you are corrupting the party with your ideas.”

“How?”

There was no answer. I decided that my relationship with the party was about over; I should have to leave it. The attacks were growing worse, and my refusal to react incited Neelson into coining more absurd phrases. I was termed a “bastard intellectual,” an “incipient Trotskyite”; it was claimed that I possessed an “anti-leadership attitude” and that I was manifesting “seraphim tendencies”—a phrase meaning that one has withdrawn from the struggle of life and considers oneself infallible.

Working all day and writing half the night brought me down with a severe chest ailment. While I was ill, a knock came at my door one morning. My

mother admitted Ed Green, the man who had demanded to know what use I planned to make of the material I was collecting from the comrades. I stared at him as I lay abed and I knew that he considered me a clever and sworn enemy of the party. Bitterness welled up in me.

“What do you want?” I asked bluntly. “You see I’m ill.”

“I have a message from the party for you,” he said.

I had not said good day, and he had not offered to say it. He had not smiled, and neither had I. He looked curiously at my bleak room.

“This is the home of a bastard intellectual,” I cut at him.

He stared without blinking. I could not endure his standing there so stone-like. Common decency made me say, “Sit down.”

His shoulders stiffened.

“I’m in a hurry.” He spoke like an army officer.

“What do you want to tell me?”

“Do you know Buddy Neelson?” he asked.

I was suspicious. Was this a political trap?

“What about Buddy Neelson?” I asked, committing myself to nothing until I knew the kind of reality I was grappling with.

“He wants to see you,” Ed Green said.

“What about?” I asked, still suspicious.

“He wants to talk with you about your party work,” he said.

“I’m ill and can’t see him until I’m well,” I said.

Ed Green stood for a fraction of a second, then turned on his heel and marched out of the room.

When my chest healed, I sought an appointment with Buddy Neelson. He was a short, black man with an ever ready smile, thick lips, a furtive manner, and a greasy, sweaty look. His bearing was nervous, self-conscious; he seemed always to be hiding some deep irritation. He spoke in short, jerky sentences, hopping nimbly from thought to thought, as though his mind worked in a free, associational

RICHARD WRIGHT is an American Negro whose schooling carried him through the grammar grades, and who has been educating himself ever since. His novel, *Native Son*, which was widely discussed in the year of its publication (1940), and his forthcoming autobiography, which will appear later this year, proclaim him as one of the most forthright and eloquent authors of his race.

This is the second of two installments.

WRIGHT  
187

STANDARD FORM NO. 64

# Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

LVO 100-135-

TO : MR. STRICKLAND *For*  
FROM : MR. E. H. WINTERROWD  
SUBJECT: COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION OF NEGROES  
(Richard Wright)  
INTERNAL SECURITY - C

DATE: October 12, 1944

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Ladd \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Carson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Hendon \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Mumford \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Jones \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Beahm \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

There are attached for record purposes two photostatic copies of Wright's second installment of "I Tried To Be A Communist" appearing in the September, 1944 issue of the Atlantic Monthly, beginning on page 48.

Attachment

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8-25-81 BY SP8 BTJ/bse

RECORDED  
&  
INDEXED

100-157464-14

170

14 OCT 13 1944

EX-3

WRIGATIR

188 50 OCT 22 1944

51

XXXXXX  
XXXXXX  
XXXXXXFEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

1 Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

- ☒ Deleted under exemption(s) b7E with no segregable material available for release to you.
- ☐ Information pertained only to a third party with no reference to you or the subject of your request.
- ☐ Information pertained only to a third party. Your name is listed in the title only.
- ☐ Document(s) originating with the following government agency(ies) \_\_\_\_\_, was/were forwarded to them for direct response to you.

Page(s) referred for consultation to the following government agency(ies); \_\_\_\_\_ as the information originated with them. You will be advised of availability upon return of the material to the FBI.

Page(s) withheld for the following reason(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ For your information: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☒ The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:  
101-157464-13 pg. 2.

XXXXXX  
XXXXXX  
XXXXXX

WRIGHT, R. 189

 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
 X DELETED PAGE(S) X  
 X NO DUPLICATION FEE X  
 X FOR THIS PAGE X  
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

NY 100-42674

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



67E

ARTICLES IN ATLANTIC MONTHLY:

Subject, RICHARD WRIGHT's articles appearing in the August and September, 1944 issues of the "ATLANTIC MONTHLY" magazine were emphatically brought to the public's attention by considerable publicity in the New York newspapers.

On July 28, 1944 the New York Herald Tribune gave a lengthy article entitled, "NEGRO AUTHOR CRITICIZES REDS AS INTOLERANT". This article states that WRIGHT in discussing his break with the Communists said that the Party fears new ideas, and that the Communists position regarding the American negro has undergone a "distinct and lamentable regression," in recent years. He described the Communists as "narrow-minded, bigoted, intolerant and frightened of new ideas which don't fit into their own." The Herald Tribune's article referred to WRIGHT's article in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY.

In an interview, Mr. WRIGHT is reported to have stated that his Communist Party membership roughly covered the period from the latter part of 1932 or early 1933 to 1940, and his early association with the Communists in Chicago was broken in 1937 when he said he was "ejected" from the Party. WRIGHT stated that he was reinstated in New York in 1937 and maintained a relationship with the Party until 1940 when he left the Party. [The paper quoted WRIGHT as saying, "Publicly, Communists will deny that there is any substantial change in their militancy but privately they offer any handy excuse. The militancy on the Negro question has passed into the hands of right-wing Negroes. That was not true eight years ago. Most of the battles then were led by Communists." He said further that he did not regard the Communists of today as effective instruments for social change, and described them as being too much the victims of the very society they are trying to change, resulting

WRIGHT, R. 190

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



NY 100-41674

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

often in intolerance and narrowness.

A similar article appeared in the New York Journal-American for July 28, 1944 entitled "REDS ALL WRONG, WRIGHT QUITS 'EM". This article states that until recently WRIGHT was one of the high priests of the Communist Party staunchly defending Red ideology as the only possible political philosophy for his race, but today he is hurling epithets at his former Communist comrades. This article also referred to the story appearing in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY and quoted the same statements which appeared in the other newspapers.

The Washington Field Office also forwarded a letter to the New York office bringing to its attention an item from the column, "The World Today" by GEORGE S. SCHUYLER appearing in the August 5, 1944 issue of the Pittsburgh Courier. This item called attention to WRIGHT's articles in the Atlantic Monthly and commented briefly upon it.

It is also interesting to note that considerable publicity was given WRIGHT's articles in the Daily Worker newspaper. In the Daily Worker for August 6, 1944, the column by BENJAMIN J. DAVIS, JR. entitled, "New Times" contains what it terms "a few words on RICHARD WRIGHT and New Ideas". DAVIS considers first the promises of WRIGHT as an author, which was indicated by his book, "Native Son". He then refers to what he calls the public and wholly unjustifiable attack on the Communists, who were the very organization whose outlooks had helped WRIGHT create his masterpiece. DAVIS stated that according to WRIGHT's statements, he withdrew from the Communists in 1940. DAVIS asked why he waited until now to make this break public and questions whom WRIGHT is trying to impress. DAVIS refers to WRIGHT's attitude as a form of superleftism which puts him in a class with NORMAN THOMAS and other "Red-Baters". DAVIS comments that this attack by WRIGHT comes at a crucial election time when the future state of the negroes requires the re-election of Roosevelt.

It is also noted that in the Daily Worker of August 15, 1944 an article by ROBERT MINOR is entitled, "Mr. WRIGHT DIDN'T DISCOVER IT". MINOR begins his article with the comment that in the half dozen years that RICHARD WRIGHT was a member of the Communist Party he did not discover that the Communists have no concern whatsoever with persuading people to be loyal to the Communist organization per se; that WRIGHT did not discover that the only thing required is that you be loyal to the peoples cause and that if you are that then loyalty to the Communist organization will take care of itself.

MINOR says that in WRIGHT's article in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY he takes a position on far bigger questions than whether a person likes Communists. He says that RICHARD WRIGHT forgot the fight of the Negro people and has taken



NY 100-41674

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

up the cause of those who are endeavoring to accentuate racial divisions. He points out that in his article WRIGHT in several instances refers to individuals as "a Jewish chap", "a Jewish boy", and "his Jewish wife".

In answer to the question purposely put by Mr. MINOR, "Can We Do Without RICHARD WRIGHT?", MINOR says "Yes", that any great movement of the people can do without any individual.

It appears from the fact that articles were written concerning Mr. WRIGHT's, "I Tried To Be a Communist", by both BENJAMIN J. DAVIS, JR. and ROBERT MINOR that the Communist organization has laid considerable importance upon this statement by WRIGHT. The matter even reached the Broadway Columns and appeared in the column of DANTON WALKER in the New York Daily News of August 28, 1944, wherein it is stated that "RICHARD WRIGHT, author of 'Native Son', has started an uproar with his two-part serial in the Atlantic Monthly called 'I Tried to Be a Communist.'"

[REDACTED]

b1  
b2  
b7  
b7C

c

c

WRIGHT, R. 192

CONFIDENTIAL

44

NY 100-41674

CONFIDENTIAL

REVIEW OF ATLANTIC MONTHLY ARTICLES:

"I TRIED TO BE A COMMUNIST" by RICHARD WRIGHT.

The first article appeared in the August 1944 issue of the Atlantic Monthly magazine and commenced with an invitation which WRIGHT received from a group of white boys he had known while working in the Post Office in Chicago. He stated that he was amazed to learn that many of these boys had his work in the John Reed Club. In regard to the Communist literature which he first read he stated that "it was not the economics of Communism, nor the great power of trade Unions, nor the excitement of underground politics that claimed me; my attention was caught by the similarity of the experiences of workers in other lands, by the possibility of uniting scattered but kindred peoples into a whole. It seemed to me that here at last, in the realm of revolutionary expression, Negro experience could find a home, a functioning value and role"

WRIGHT became a leader in the John Reed Club and contributed to such publications as "Left Front", "Anvil, and "New Masses". In his presentation WRIGHT points out that his first misunderstanding with other Negro Communists grew out of the fact that because of his publications and writing they classified him as an intellectual.

He also had difficulty with the Party in Chicago because of his efforts to learn of the life of one ROSS, a Negro Communist. WRIGHT says that ROSS typified the effective street agitator, and was a Southern born Negro who had migrated to the North, and whose life reflected the crude hopes and frustrations of the peasant in the city. WRIGHT felt that if he could get ROSS' story he could make known some of the difficulties inherent in the adjustment of a folk people to an urban environment. Word spread of this activity of WRIGHT in the Communist Party, and he was warned to stop such activities.

These articles by WRIGHT are auto-biographical in nature, and WRIGHT points out at this time that he gave up the idea of biographical sketches on individuals he met, and settled upon writing short stories using the material he had gotten from ROSS and his friends. One such story was published in an anthology under the title of "Big Boy Leaves Home."

WRIGHT, R. 193

CONFIDENTIAL

NY 100-41674

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

WRIGHT attended the National John Reed congress in the summer of 1934 and was stunned at the decision announced by a nationally known Communist to dissolve the clubs. WRIGHT said that he asked "Why", and was told that the dissolution was because the clubs did not serve the new peoples front policy.

The concluding portion of this first article deals with WRIGHTS attempts at the Congress of American Writers held in New York City in 1935.

The second article in the September 1944 issue of the Atlantic Monthly commences with WRIGHT's work after the dissolution of the John Reed Clubs. He said that at this time he avoided unit meetings for fear of being subjected to discipline. He tells them in an assignment by the Party directing him to organize a committee against the high cost of living, and he subsequently entered into this work. Later on he was asked to go to Switzerland as a Youth Delegate and then to the Soviet Union, but he refused because it would have interfered with his writing.

He relates the story of a unit meeting at which he requested that his membership be dropped from the Party rolls, although he desired to retain his membership in those organizations in which the Party has influence, and hoped that sometime in the future he could meet and talk with Party leaders as to what tasks he could best perform. Wright tells of unjustified attacks by other members on which he was labeled "a Trotskyite" and accused of other ideas contrary to those of the Communist Party. A considerable portion of this final article is devoted to the trial within the Communist Party of WRIGHT's friend ROSS concerning whom he had once accumulated material for with the purpose of using it in his writings. He dwells at considerable length on the development of the charges in this trial, the manner of its conduction and the presentation of charges including the attitude of the members present. He pictures the trial as being <sup>as</sup> such a nature so talkatively presented and so sincerely made and with the ultimate charges being made by the accused's best friends, so that it resulted in the confession of the accused that he was guilty of the charges. In regard to ROSS at the conclusion of the trial, WRIGHT states "his voice broke in a sob, no one prodded him. No one tortured him. No one threatened him. He was free to go out of the hall and never see another Communist, but he did not want to. He could not. The vision of the communal world had sunk down into his soul and it would never leave him until life left him. He talked on, outlining how he had erred, how he would reform." WRIGHT continues, "I knew, as I sat there, that there were many people who thought they knew life who had been skeptical of the Moscow trials. But they could not have been skeptical had they witnessed this astonishing trial. Ross had not been doped; he had been awakened. It was not a fear of the Communist Party that had made him confess but a fear of the punishment that he

WRIGHT, R. 194

CONF ID